

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 02790 270604Z
ACTION HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8864
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

UNCLAS BANGKOK 2790

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: INDOCHINESE REFUGEES: RTG OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON THAI MARITIME
PATROLS TO DISCOURAGE REFUGEE ARRIVAL AND ON SLOWNESS OF
RESETTLEMENT ABROAD

REF: BANGKOK 2711 (NOTAL)

1. FOLLOWING IS THE VERBATIM TEXT OF A JAN 27 BANGKOK POST ARTICLE
HEADLINED "GOVT FORCED TO TURN THEM AWAY".
2. BEGIN TEXT ROYAL THAI NAVY PATROL BOATS ARE BLOCKING VIETNAMESE
REFUGEES FROM LANDING HERE BECAUSE WESTERN COUNTRIES HAVE NOT
ASSURED THE GOVERNMENT THE REFUGEES WILL BE MOVED PROMPTLY TO THIRD
COUNTRIES, A GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL SAID YESTERDAY.
3. COLONEL KAMOL PRACHUABMOH, DIRECTOR OF THE INTERIOR MINISTRY'S
OPERATIONS CENTER FOR DISPLACED PERSONS, SAID IN RESPONSE TO A
REPORTER'S QUESTION THAT VIETNAMESE REFUGEE BOATS WERE BEING STOP-
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PED, BUT IF A BOAT WAS JUDGED UNSEAWORTHY OR HAD ENGINE PROBLEMS
IT WAS ALLOWED TO LAND.

4. "OUR NAVAL PATROLS WILL NOT TURN AWAY SMALL BOATS UNABLE TO
CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY," COLONEL KAMOL SAID.

5. COLONEL KAMOL, SPEAKING DURING A PANEL DISCUSSION AT THE

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS CLUB OF THAILAND, SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORCED TO TAKE THE ACTION BECAUSE WESTERN GOVERNMENTS COULD NOT ASSURE BOAT REFUGEES WOULD QUICKLY BE MOVED ON TO NEW HOMES IN THIRD COUNTRIES.

6. LEADING OFFICIALS OF THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN REFUGEE PROGRAMS SAID IT WAS NOT LEGALLY POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO COMMIT THEIR GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT REFUGEES SIGHT UNSEEN.

7. U.S. EMBASSY REFUGEE COORDINATOR THOMAS BARNES SAID THAT SOME CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE, SUCH AS DRUG SMUGGLERS, WERE LEGALLY UNACCEPTABLE.

8. BARNES WENT ON TO SAY THAT A NEW ALLOTMENT OF 7000 MORE REFUGEES WOULD ALLOW THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO TAKE CARE OF THE REMAINING 1900 BOAT PEOPLE IN THAILAND AND ALLOW FOR CONTINUED FLOW FROM VIETNAM. HE DENIED THAT THE U.S. WAS JUST "SKIMMING THE CREAM" OF THE REFUGEE POPULATION.

9. DESPITE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL PERMISSION FOR 15,000 MORE REFUGEES IN LATE SUMMER 1977, FEW NEW REFUGEES HAVE MOVED TO THE UNITED STATES; THE AMERICAN PROGRAM STILL LAGS BEHIND THE STEADIER FRENCH ABSORPTION OF ABOUT 1,000 REFUGEES PER MONTH.

10. WITH A TOUCH OF IRRITATION IN HIS VOICE COLONEL KAMOL SAID, "THEY (WESTERN REFUGEE OFFICIALS) ARE SO SLOW. EVEN WHEN REFUGEES UNCLASSIFIED

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ARE QUICKLY ACCEPTED, IT SOMETIMES TAKES MORE THAN A YEAR BEFORE THEY FINALLY LEAVE."

1. STATISTICS GIVE THE NUMBER OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES WHO HAVE LEFT THAILAND FOR VARIOUS THIRD COUNTRIES AS: 28,000 FOR FRANCE, 22,000 FOR THE UNITED STATES, 1,800 FOR AUSTRALIA AND FEWER THAN 1,000 FOR ALL OTHERS COMBINED. END TEXT
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